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MR. MORGAN'S RELATION  
TO ART<sup>1</sup>

TO those who only looked at Mr. Morgan from a single angle, whatever that angle might be, he bulked so large that they thought they saw his whole stature. But from whatever point he was viewed there could only be seen a small fraction of his great personality.

To the world of business he seemed the embodiment of some titanic force, whether it operated to save the credit of a nation or to re-create a great enterprise.

To such a world it must have seemed inconceivable that this same person could halt his great business projects to admire some small work of art, and could lay aside both business and art to play with his grandchildren, or to caress his favorite dog.

But such was the real Mr. Morgan. To him it was not incongruous to assemble the forces which stayed the panic of 1907 for that famous all-night session at his library in the company of a placid Madonna of Raphael and a delicate statuette by Donatello. There were two of Donatello's statuettes in his favorite corner. He loved them and was wont to say they reminded him of his own children.

Mr. Morgan was easily the greatest art collector of his time. Was it the mere pleasure of possession, the ambition to have and be known to have the choicest objects of art, which attracted him? No, not primarily, though such pleasure and such ambition there must have been. He loved art for art's sake. His taste was highly cultivated and rarely erred. He trusted his own judgment in selection, and his mental operation was as intuitive and instantaneous when applied to the purchase of a picture as to a business transaction. I recall several instances.

I was with him in London at the establishment of a noted dealer. The dealer took from his pocket a miniature and said to Mr. Morgan: "You want that for your collection." Mr. Morgan glanced at

it for only a second. "How much did you pay for it?" said he. The dealer, who evidently had some understanding with Mr. Morgan that the price to Mr. Morgan should bear some relation to the price that he, the dealer, had paid, and who quite as evidently mistrusted me, whispered something in Mr. Morgan's ear. Mr. Morgan handed the miniature back to him at once. A little later at the same interview the dealer took out another miniature. Said he, "How about this one, Mr. Morgan?" The same quick pantomime was enacted, and Mr. Morgan put the miniature in his pocket.

I was admiring an exquisite Gothic statuette in his library. I said, "Mr. Morgan, how did you possibly get that?" "Why," said he, "I was walking on a street in Paris. I passed a man carrying something under his cloak and the head of that statue peeped out. I asked him what he was doing with it. He said he wanted to sell it. I took him to my hotel and in five minutes I became its owner." Later his expert friends told him he had obtained a masterpiece at an insignificant price.

He frequently paid large prices. He used to say, "No price is too large for an object of unquestioned beauty and known authenticity." And he acted on this belief. No wonder he vexed the souls of amateurs whose purses were more slender, and excited the envy of museum directors whose government grants were insufficient to compete with his large resources. But now that he has brought all these acquired treasures to our own country, which one of us will say that his was not the broader perspective?

Mr. Morgan was interested in our Metropolitan Museum from its very beginning. He was one of that courageous band of public-spirited citizens who worked for a year to raise the pitiful \$106,000 with which it was started. He became a trustee in 1888 and was elected President in 1904. From that time it became with him an absorbing interest. He would drop any piece of business at any time to give thought to its affairs. I have frequently in these later years called him up by telephone to inquire when he could see me

<sup>1</sup>An address delivered at the memorial meeting held at the New York Chamber of Commerce on April 3d, by Robert W. de Forest, Second Vice-President.

conveniently about some museum matter and his almost invariable response was — "Right now."

I recall the Monday of that famous all-night session which stayed the panic of 1907. He presided over a long meeting at the Museum that afternoon, and only after its routine was all over did he quietly remark that he had to hurry home to attend to a serious financial situation.

Nor was his interest in the Museum solely that of a collector. He found in the reorganization which took place when he became its President ample scope for his broad perspective and constructive power. He was in deep sympathy with its recent development on the side of industrial art and education. Never did he look upon it as a private possession either of his own or of his fellow-trustees. It was as a great public institution that it appealed to him. Nothing pleased him more than the true democracy of those recent receptions where he stood at the head of the receiving line and shook hands with everyone who filed by.

An incident of one of those receptions comes to my mind, which was eminently characteristic. Among the approaching guests, conspicuous from absence of evening costume, was a woman with a baby in her arms. To the rest of us the woman's presence seemed an impudent intrusion. Many men would have directed the attendants to remove her. Not so Mr. Morgan. He shook hands with her as graciously as he did with the lady in full evening dress who preceded her, and as she passed by said to me, "Quick — get that baby's name, so that I can make it a life fellow of the Museum." Said I, "That will cost you one thousand dollars." "So much the better," said he. He did not stop before he acted to inquire who that baby was. He took in the situation at a glance, though he had never seen the woman before. She was the wife of one of our new Museum attendants, who

knew no better, who was eager to attend the reception, and who could not come without bringing her baby with her.

Mr. Morgan never saw all his collections assembled together. Fortunately for America they are all here, but only his pictures, and not all of these, have been unpacked. But I am sure his satisfaction in having them exhibited together would not have been the selfish pleasure of so seeing them himself, but the pleasure of seeing his fellow-countrymen enjoy them. The son spoke for the father when he said yesterday, "Do not keep my father's pictures at the Museum closed any longer out of respect to his memory. Open the gallery to the public. It is what he would have wished."

One of the greatest desires that Mr. Morgan had this last year of his life was that the city would provide for a new wing to the Museum. Not so much that it would make space in which to show his collections (his were not the only collections that needed exhibition space) but as an earnest of the city's coöperation with and interest in the great public institution whose welfare he had so much at heart. It was one of the last things he spoke of before he sailed. I wish he could have lived until yesterday when he would have known that this wish of his had been fulfilled.

Our Metropolitan Museum was not the only art institution in which he was interested. He had a broad vision of a great American Academy at Rome, formed by the union of the original Academy with the American School for Classical Study, established high on the Janiculum overlooking the "Eternal City." That dream he was turning into reality when he was taken away.

His loss to our Museum and to the cause of art would be irreparable except for that which, while living, he has done, and that which, though he be dead, his example will inspire others to do.